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fêng-shui was good, and buried them. Within a short time, the God of Thunder destroyed the graves, and then he bought another plot. He had wealth, but was not a good man, so the gods would not protect his graves. When Mr. Fung's grandmother died he buried her in the first plot of land, and nothing occurred to her grave; this was not because of his poverty, but for his good living." The translator adds: "The literal meaning of the two characters Fêng and Shui is wind and water; their practical meaning is a good position for buildings and graves. It is believed that the good fêng-shui of a parent's grave will secure prosperity; and if a man has been a vagabond to his parents in life, he will, if able, make up for it by getting a good grave, not so much for his parents' honor as for his own selfish ends. Men of wealth spend large sums to engage the services of a man who is supposed to know his trade of fêng-shui, whilst a poor man has to bury where it suits him."

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES.

BOOKS.

NOTES OF THE FOLK-LORE OF THE FJORT (French Congo). By R. E. DENNETT, author of "Seven Years among the Fjort." With an Introduction by MARY H. KINGSLEY. Illustrated. (Publications of the Folk-Lore Society, xli.) D. Nutt: London. 1898. Pp. xxxii, 169.

The appearance of the present volume is likely to end a long and animated controversy in regard to the proper use of the term "folk-lore." It is not many years since the Folk-Lore Society officially defined that word as intended to represent only survivals of prehistoric usage and belief among races in an advanced stage of culture. On the other hand, it was pointed out in this *Journal* that such limited definition would render the term of very little use to countries possessing a stock of genuinely savage tradition, and that, whatever might have been the original significance, common usage has now determined its employment in a wider sense, namely, as coextensive with oral tradition. Circumstances have so far wrought in favor of this contention, that we now see the Folk-Lore Society abandoning the restrictions itself had created, and issuing a work in which the term "folk-lore" is made to include the myths, stories, legends, pious beliefs, and religious practices of the most savage African tribes. This authoritative employment of the word will settle the question, and for the future make it agreed that the study and collection of folk-lore means the study and collection of oral traditions of every sort, in all stages of culture, with the enveloping atmosphere of usage and conduct. The writer of this notice cannot but take a lively gratification in such issue of the argument.

By "the Fjort" Mr. Dennett means the tribes that once formed the great kingdom of Congo, especially the two coast provinces north of the great river. As relating to the West African coast, the book therefore forms a complement of that of H. Chatelain (of which, strange to say, Miss Kings-

ley appears ignorant), published as the first volume of "Memoirs of the American Folk-Lore Society." The latter is very much fuller in respect to the number and length of the tales included, and from a linguistic point of view more satisfactory, as the original text is given, and the translation is closely literal, which is not the case with Mr. Dennett's work. Also, Mr. Chatelain's book set a good example in respect to the accompaniment of tales with copious ethnographic notes illustrative of details, a method more perfectly followed in the Navaho Legends of Dr. Mathews, and which deserves to be uniformly adopted; the absence of such comments leaves a sense of imperfection. On the other hand, the book contains what was lacking in Chatelain's work, — a body of truly savage customs, and an account of religious belief of the highest interest. Mr. Dennett is an example of a missionary who has the intelligence to perceive that, if one wishes to advance the condition of any simple people, it is really worth while to try to comprehend something of their mental condition. If not absolutely without prejudice, he is nevertheless inclined to take a fair and favorable view of the essential character of the intellectual status of the unchristianized negro: we are allowed to perceive that the native faith is in reality a complicated and remarkable system of worship and ethics, entirely adapted to the cultural condition out of which it has arisen, and calculated to comfort, satisfy, and inspire the human heart; that, as is the case in all ethnic worships, there are present moral and emotional requisites which only need time and opportunity in order to expand into artistic and literary developments comparable with those of the civilized races.

Respecting the different classes of tales included in this collection may be said a few words: (1.) Legends, or tales describing the conduct of spirits; the relations to mankind of supernatural heroines whom we should call fairies; miracles relating the interference of deities in the ethical sphere. (2.) Animal tales, tales of the Rabbit, Antelope, Leopard, etc., answer to those given by Chatelain. No. 23 introduces the omnipresent "Tar Baby" story; into this, a tale contained in the collection of the brothers Grimm is introduced: here the borrowing is no doubt from European contact. (3.) "Exempla;" a large class of tales, many of which also deal with animals, serve the purpose of legal precedents, and are called by Miss Kingsley legal tales. She observes: "They clearly are the equivalents to leading cases with us, and, just as the English would cite *A. v. B.*, so would the African cite some such story as 'The Crocodile and the Hen,' or any other stories you find ending with, 'and the people said it was right.'" "It may at first strike the European as strange when, listening to the trial of a person for some offence before either a set of elders or a chief, he observes that the discussion of the affair soon leaves the details of the case itself, and busies itself with the consideration of the conduct of a hyena and a bush-cat, or the reasons why monkeys live in trees, or some such matter; but if the European once gets used to the method, and does not merely request to be informed why he should be expected to play at Æsop's Fables at his time of life, the fascination of the game will seize on him, and he will soon be able to play at Æsop's Fables with the best, and to point out that

the case, say, of the 'Crocodile and the Hen,' does not exonerate some friend of a debtor of his from having committed iniquity in not having given up property, lodged with him by the debtor, to its rightful owner." Mr. Chatelain's work furnishes a number of highly interesting specimens of tales used in this manner. (4.) Anecdotes describing customs, natural history, or curious experiences of individuals. (5.) Jests, some of which are also naturally animal tales.

On the other hand, a number of classes of tales are wanting which, nevertheless, certainly exist in West African folk-lore: (1.) Nature myths. The existence of such is indicated by mention of the existence of legends concerning the sun and moon described as two brothers. (2.) Creation myths. Mr. Dennett thinks these wanting, save as a reflection of European theology; this may be doubted. (3.) Sagas, traditional tribal histories. These, also, Mr. Dennett supposes to be non-existent; but the contrary is shown by a remark of Chatelain ("*Angola Legends*," p. 21). The truth is, that this material, which no doubt includes also fables as to world-making, is esoteric. Until the secrets of the ceremonies are penetrated, African religion will remain uncomprehended. It must be expected that long ancestral histories, answering to those of American aborigines, will finally be discovered. (4.) Hero tales. Chatelain's No. 5 describes a slayer of cannibals, who visits the king of the lower world, demands his daughter in marriage, is sent as a task to capture the giant crocodile, eaten by the latter, rescued by his younger brother, with whom he quarrels about the division of spoil; the pair become the eastern and western thunders. Dennett's No. 12 in a measure corresponds, but his version is so condensed and free that it is not clear just what is the connection. It will be seen that, if these views are well-founded, the most important elements of African folk-lore are as yet imperfectly represented in the collections. Under these circumstances, comparisons with non-African matter will be delusive; the fact probably may be that every species of European or Asiatic tradition is paralleled in Africa.

No room remains to speak of the most interesting part of the volume, its account of the religion of the tribe. Only one word. Miss Kingsley is fond of speaking of the "fetish religion" of West Africa, but she perfectly understands that the word is compatible with the worship of deities connected with nature. Why, then, use "fetish," a Portuguese word originally representing European witchcraft? If the term be understood to convey that the relation of African worship to the material object essentially differs from that of any other polytheistic faith, it is a delusion and a snare. "Fetishism" is ordinarily supposed to denote a simple and very crude material worship, but in point of fact there is no such simplicity; there is a highly complicated system of various faiths, as many-sided and elusive as any other religious system. The Puritans satisfied themselves with stigmatizing saint-worship as idolatry; such designation only proved their ignorance. In dealing with an uncomprehended phenomenon, the first thing to do is to get rid of deceptive terms calculated to make ignorance pass for knowledge; one of them is the word "fetish."

W. W. Newell.